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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: Small Arms Cache Seized in Nicaragua

Summary

¶1. (U) On Sunday, November 15 the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) and the Nicaraguan Army (NA) seized a small arms cache from a Nissan Pathfinder traveling north on the Pan American Highway 35 miles outside of Managua after it ignored a police checkpoint. Nicaraguan police and military officials believe the seized weapons belong to a cell of the Mexican Sinaloa Cartel that is suspected to be operating in Nicaragua. The weapons confiscation marks an alarming trend of arms flowing north to Honduras along the Pan American Highway in Nicaragua. End Summary.

Suspected Arms Cache of Sinaloa Cartel Confiscated Flowing North

¶2. (U) On Sunday, November 16 at 3:00am the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) and the Nicaraguan Army (NA) confiscated a small arms cache 35 miles outside of Managua from a Nissan Pathfinder traveling north on the Pan American Highway after it failed to stop at a police check point. The NNP, who fired warning shots once the SUV failed to stop, later found the vehicle abandoned near the Pan American Highway and seized 61 weapons with ammunition from the trunk. The NA confiscated 53 AK-47 rifles, 4 M-16 assault rifles, a GALIL assault rifle, M-79 grenade launcher, 2 hand held improvised projectile devices, 10 fragmentation grenades, 20 rolls of TNT, and over 82 AK-47 magazines. Police failed to apprehend or identify the suspects involved in the incident.

¶3. (U) Both the NNP and NA believe that the seized materials belong to a small cell of the Mexican Sinaloa drug trafficking cartel suspected to be operating in Nicaragua. Officials identified Roberto Bedolla Corono, alias "El Ingeniero," as the principal leader of the Nicaraguan based Sinaloa cell, which is suspected to be buying arms principally across rural areas in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan officials did not detail Corono's connection to the weapons seizure. Following the confiscation, the NNP extended its investigation by raiding several locations in Managua reportedly being used as arms caches, including a house previously rented by Corono. The searches yielded no further arms confiscations; however, further investigations are being conducted.

Origin and Destination of Weapons

¶4. (SBU) The exact origin of the seized weapons is currently unknown. However, Salvador GutiC)rrez, head of the Nicaragua Army Special Forces, claimed that the AK-47 rifles obtained originated from diverse sources as evidenced by their varied models. The confiscated weapons are being sent to the National Criminal Laboratory to ascertain their source. Vilma Reyes, Nicaraguan Police Commissioner, speculated that the cache was going to Mexico to support the operations of the Sinaloa Cartel. When questioned

by local reporters, GutiC)rrez rejected the possibility that the small arsenal originated from Nicaraguan weapon storage facilities given the strict oversight of these sites by the NA. We have requested additional information on the seizure from the NNP, including serial numbers from the weapons.

Comments

15. (SBU) Although drugs and currency are the contraband most commonly transited in Nicaragua, based on anecdotal accounts, there appears to be an increase in weapons smuggling activity in Nicaragua. More importantly, this weapons seizure marks a disturbing trend of weapons moving north among the Pan American Highway toward Honduras as opposed to the south, the traditional transit route for weapons smuggling.

CALLAHAN